

I know you guys mean well but this is exactly why I hate rules made in Lansing or DC that effect my kids in their school. My daughter is very smart, straight A's, in advanced math etc. in 8th grade. She is also very talented. Art, Band. However there was some legislation that is forcing her to have a silly computer class and two silly foreign language classes in her High School career. This will keep her from having her art class and possibly even band. Why when my child is so advanced and has extra abilities do you guys think you know enough to enforce things like this on her as a freshman in HS. This is the kind of stuff that really comes across elitist. This is why we hire people in our schools, to figure out what our children need to be successful in life. This should not be determined by legislators in Lansing. It should be determined by people who actually have degrees in school admin and teaching and counseling. I just happened to find this out the other night. Our school has had to change from their block system to cut staff and costs. This is because it seems the Governor and Legislators think it's more important to have ice skating rinks in Detroit and colleges funded by our school tax dollars than our grade and High Schools properly funded.

So while cutting their funding yet more you force things on them like useless computer classes and foreign language classes. They have to shave a lot of money out of their budget. They are taking out a loan for the first time in years to make payroll. I just think sometimes you guys don't think about how your "feels and sounds good" legislation is effecting people. You're hearing from unions that just want more teachers employed so they get more dues but they do not care about our kids. A language can be learned anytime on the internet or on cd. Both my kids were practically raised with computers in their hands but you just don't have access to a band or art teacher every day. I hope you see it in your heart to quickly kill Common Core and give control of the curriculum back to the local administrators. At least the ones who can handle it and our school certainly can because the parents care and are watching what they are doing. Do this to the bad schools if you must but leave my kid's schools alone. I trust my kids to our administrators and teachers every day and my husband is on the school board and the other men and women are every bit as smart as you guys and have more at stake. They are doing the right things for our kids as are our administrators. Let them do what we pay them to do and please quit trying to micro-manage them.

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Principal: 'I was naïve about Common Core'

By Valerie Strauss, Updated: March 4, 2013

Here's a powerful piece about how an award-winning principal went from being a [Common Core](#) supporter to an opponent. This was written by Carol Burris, principal of South Side High School in New York. She was named the 2010 New York State Outstanding Educator by the School Administrators Association of New York State. She is one of the co-authors [of the principals' letter](#) against evaluating teachers by student test scores, which has been signed by 1,535 New York principals.

By Carol Burris

When I first read about the [Common Core State Standards](#), I cheered. I believe that our schools should teach all students (except for those who have severe learning disabilities), the skills, habits and knowledge that they need to be successful in post secondary education. That doesn't mean that every teenager must be prepared to enter Harvard, but it does mean that every young adult, with few exceptions, should at least be prepared to enter their local community college. That is how we give students a real choice.

I even co-authored a book, ["Opening the Common Core,"](#) on how to help schools meet that goal. It is a book about rich curriculum and equitable teaching practices, not about testing and sanctions. We wrote it because we thought that the Common Core would be a student-centered reform based on principles of equity.

I confess that I was naïve. I should have known in an age in which standardized tests direct teaching and learning, that the standards themselves would quickly become operationalized by tests. Testing, coupled with the evaluation of teachers by scores, is driving its implementation. The promise of the [Common Core is dying](#) and teaching and learning are being distorted. The well that should sustain the Core has been poisoned.

I hear about those distortions every day. Many of the teachers in my high school are also the parents of young children. They come into my office with horror stories regarding the incessant pre-testing, testing and test prep that is taking place in their own children's classrooms. Last month, a colleague gave me a multiple-choice quiz taken by his seven-year old son during music. Here is a question:

Kings and queens COMMISSIONED Mozart to write symphonies for celebrations and ceremonies. What does COMMISSION mean?

1. to force someone to do work against his or her will
2. to divide a piece of music into different movements
3. to perform a long song accompanied by an orchestra
4. to pay someone to create artwork or a piece of music

Whether or not learning the word 'commission' is appropriate for second graders could be debated—I personally think it is a bit over the top. What is of deeper concern, however, is that during a time when 7 year olds should be listening to and making music, they are instead taking a vocabulary quiz.

I think that the reason for the quiz is evident to anyone who has been following the reform debate. The Common Core places an extraordinary emphasis on vocabulary development. Probably, the music teacher believes she must do her part in test prep. More than likely she is being evaluated in part by the English Language Arts test scores of the building. Teachers are engaged in practices like these because they are pressured and afraid, not because they think the assessments are educationally sound. Their principals are pressured and nervous about their own scores and the school's scores. Guaranteed, every child in the class feels that pressure and trepidation as well.

An English teacher in my building came to me with a 'reading test' that her third grader took. Her daughter did poorly on the test. As both a mother and an English teacher she knew that the difficulty of the passage and the questions were way over grade level. Her daughter, who is an excellent reader, was crushed. She and I looked on the side of the copy of the quiz and found the word "Pearson." The school, responding to pressure from New York State, had purchased test prep materials from the company that makes the exam for the state.

I am troubled that a company that has a multi-million dollar contract to create tests for the state should also be able to profit from producing test prep materials. I am even more deeply troubled that this wonderful little girl, whom I have known since she was born, is being subject to this distortion of what her primary education should be.

There are so many stories that I could tell—the story of my guidance counselor's sixth-grade, learning disabled child who feels like a failure due to constant testing, a principal of an elementary school who is furious with having to use a book he deems inappropriate for third graders because his district bought the State Education Department approved common core curriculum, and the frustration of math teachers due to the ever-changing rules regarding the use of calculators on the tests. And all of this is mixed with the toxic fear that comes from knowing you will be evaluated by test results and that "your score" will be known to any of your parents who ask.

When state education officials chide, "Don't drill for the test, it does not work", teachers laugh. Of course test prep works. Every parent [who has ever paid hundreds of dollars](#) for [SAT prep](#) knows it works—but no parent is foolish enough to think that

the average 56 point 'coaching' jump in an SAT score means that their child is more "college ready."

[Test scores](#) are a rough proxy for learning. Tests imperfectly examine selected domains of skills, so that we can infer what students know. Real learning occurs in the mind of the learner when she makes connections with prior learning, makes meaning, and retains that knowledge in order to create additional meaning from new information. In short, with tests we see traces of learning, not learning itself.

What occurs in a "data driven", high-stakes learning environment is that the full domain of what should be learned narrows to those items tested. The Common Core, for example, wants students to grow in five skill areas in English Language Arts — reading, writing, speaking, listening and collaboration. But the Common Core tests will only measure reading and writing. Parents can expect that the other three will be neglected as teachers frantically try to prepare students for the difficult and high-stakes tests. What gets measured gets done, and make no mistake: "reformers" understand that full well. In fact, they count on it. They see data, not children. For the corporate reformers, test data constitute the bottom-line profits that they watch.

There is no one more knowledgeable about school change and systemic reforms than Michael Fullan. He is a renowned international authority on school reform, having been actively engaged in both its implementation as well in the analysis of reform results. I had the pleasure of listening to him this week at the [Long Island ASCD spring conference](#).

Fullan told us that the present reforms are [led by the wrong drivers of change](#) — individual accountability of teachers, linked to test scores and punishment, cannot be successful in transforming schools. He told us that the Common Core standards will fall of their own weight because standards and assessments, rather than curriculum and instruction are driving the Common Core. He explained that the right driver of school change is capacity building. Data should be used as a strategy for improvement, not for accountability purposes. The Common Core is a powerful tool, but it is being implemented using the wrong drivers.

Fullan helped to [successfully lead](#) the transformation of schools in Ontario, Canada, and he has tried to influence our national conversation, but his advice has been shunned. I will close with a final quote from Fullan and let readers draw their own conclusions:

A fool with a tool is still a fool. A fool with a powerful tool is a dangerous fool.

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